

CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name: Lease Improvement / Livestock water development, Lease #549

Proposed Implementation Date: Fall 2011/Winter 2012

Proponents: Pugsley Ranches Inc., PO Box 460, Chester, MT 59522

Location: Lease #549, ALL, Section 8, T29N, R5E,

County: Liberty

Trust: Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

Pugsley Ranches Inc have requested permission to install 1320 feet of livestock water pipeline and a stock water tank on State Land. The primary objective is to provide reliable livestock water in this state land pasture and to increase livestock distribution.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

Pugsley Ranches Inc.-Proponent and Surface Lessee
DNRC-Surface Owner
NRCS-EQIP-Proponent

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

There are no other agencies with jurisdiction on this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Deny the proponents permission to install the stock water pipeline and the stock water tank.

Alternative B (the Proposed action) – Grant the proponents permission to install the stock water pipeline and the stock water tank.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The soils vary from clays to silts. General topography is flat. The pipeline will be ripped in which will minimize soil disturbances and erosion. Heavy equipment will cause localized areas of soil compaction and will disturb the soil

were the water pipeline line is being placed. All disturbed areas will be reclaimed by leveling the pipeline area and reseeding. Cumulative impacts on soil resources are not expected.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

There are no ephemeral drainages, streams, riparian areas or other surface waters on this on this tract. There currently is no documented and/or recorded water right on the state land and other water quality and/or quantity issues will not be impacted by the proposed action. The water source used by the Pugsley Ranch for this project is "Tiber Water" distributed through the North Central Montana Regional Water Authority project. The proposed action will improve overall water reliability and quantity for the proponent on the adjacent State Land.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

The proposed action will not impact the air quality.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

Vegetation will be minimally impacted along the 1320 feet pipeline corridor. The pipeline will be installed by a static plow, which will rip in the pipeline with one pass and minimally impact existing vegetation. Noxious and annual weeds within the proposed construction area is a concern, but this will be mitigated because the lessee is responsible for controlling weeds within the construction area. Cumulative impacts on the vegetative resources are not expected as the proposed construction area will be reclaimed and reseeded. All disturbed areas will be reseeded with a native grass seed mixture consisting of 35% Western Wheatgrass, 35% Slender Wheatgrass, 15% Blue Bunch Wheatgrass, 10% Green Needle grass, and 5% Lewis Blue Flax.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted and there were no plant species of concern noted or potential species of concern noted on the NRIS survey.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:

Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

The area is not considered critical wildlife habitat. However, this tract provides habitat for a variety of big game species (mule deer, whitetail deer, pronghorn antelope), predators (coyote, fox, badger), upland game birds (sharp tail grouse, Hungarian partridge), other non-game mammals, raptors and various songbirds. The proposal does not include any land use change which would yield changes to the wildlife habitat. The proposed action will not impact wildlife forage, cover, or traveling corridors. Nor will this action change the juxtaposition of wildlife forage, water, or hiding and thermal cover. Wildlife usage is expected to return to "normal" (pre-action usage) following the completion of the project. The proposed livestock water project will also provide a reliable water source for wildlife.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:

Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

The proposed livestock water pipeline does not include any activities which would alter any habitat, so no effects are expected in either alternative. At this time, no known unique, endangered, fragile or limited environmental resources have been identified within the proposed project area.

A review of Natural Heritage data through the NRIS was conducted for this area and 9 species of special concern were identified.

Mammals – Blacktail Prairie Dog. This species is not found on this tract and therefore will not be impacted.

Birds – Great Blue Heron, Burrowing Owl, Chestnut Collared Longspur, Loggerhead Shrike, Ling-billed Curlew, McCown's Longspur. These species are not expected to be impacted because this particular tract does not contain many, if any of these species and project timing (fall / winter) is such that these species have migrated from this area.

Fish – Blue Sucker, Lake Trout, Sauger. There are no water resources located on this tract and therefore these species will not be impacted.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:

Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

The water line installation route was surveyed and no cultural resource items were located. In addition, the site was further reviewed by the NRCS's archaeologist prior to the installation of the water line. NRCS has completed a negative findings report and state that no cultural resources are present in the project area.

11. AESTHETICS:

Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

The livestock water line will be buried so there will be no aesthetic impacts.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:

Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

The demand on environmental resources such as land, water, air, or energy will not be affected by the proposed action. The proposed action will not consume resources that are limited in the area. There are no other projects in the area that will affect the proposed project.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:

List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no other projects or plans being considered on the tract listed on this EA.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" if no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:

Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

The proposed project will not change human safety in the area.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:

Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

The proposed livestock water development will improve livestock distribution and generally improve the proponent's ranching opportunities.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:

Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

The project will be installed by using local contractors. The proposed action will not significantly affect long-term employment in the surrounding communities.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:

Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

The proposed action will not affect tax revenue.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:

Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

This project is of a small scale and being funded by NRCS-EQIP. There will be no additional stress placed on the existing infrastructure of the area.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:

List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

The proposed action is in compliance with State and County laws. No other management plans are in effect for the area.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:

Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

This proposed project area is legally accessible. The proposed action is not expected to impact general recreational and wilderness activities on this state tract.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:

Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:

Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:

How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

The proposed action will not impact the cultural uniqueness or diversity of the area.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The livestock water development will provide a reliable source of water to the pasture which will positively impact livestock distribution and general ranch management. This project is being cost-shared through NRCS – EQIP. This project is authorized under the improvement request form.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	Name: Erik Eneboe	Date: November 28, 2011
	Title: Conrad Unit Manager, Conrad Unit, Central Land Office	

V. FINDINGS

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

Authorize Improvement Request

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

Significant impacts are not expected to occur as a result of this proposed stock water development project. The stock water tank on state land will improve livestock distribution and utilization on trust lands. There are no unique habitats on state land or water sources to be impacted. This is a small, sound management practice

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

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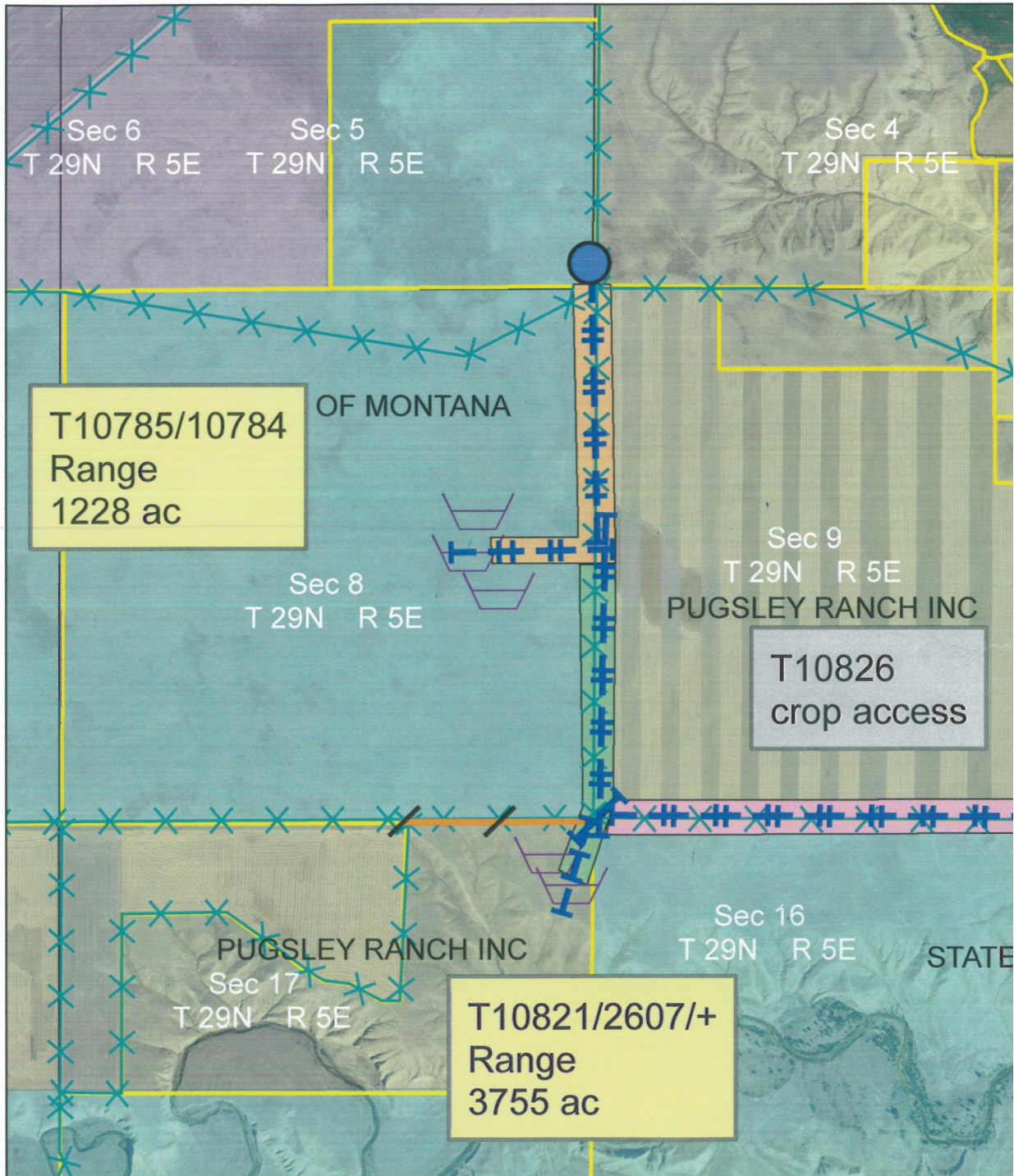
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More Detailed EA

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No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	Name: Garry Williams
	Title: Area Manager, CLO, DNRC
Signature:  Date: 11/28/2011	



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